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THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE GENESIS OF THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

To explain Kant's system is to trace its historical derivation. KUNO FISCHER.

Whatever bears on the origin of philosophic opinion bears also on its validity. E.
B. TYLOR.

Were the question of origin once determined that of use and validity would be settled ipso facto. KANT.

I. LOGICAL.

IN the last paragraph of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant describes the only possible methods of philosophy and forecasts the results that may be expected to follow upon the adoption of his own. "As regards those who observe a *scientific* method," he says, "they have the choice to proceed either *dogmatically* or *sceptically*, but in both cases they are under obligation to proceed *systematically*. When I have mentioned in relation to the former the celebrated Wolff, and in relation to the latter David Hume, I may for my present purpose leave all the rest unnamed. The only path that is still open is the *critical*. If the reader has been kind and patient enough to follow me to the end along this path, he may judge for himself whether, if he will help, as far as in him lies, towards making this footpath a high road, it may not be possible to achieve, even before the close of the present century, what so many centuries have not been able to achieve, namely, to give complete satisfaction to human reason with regard to those questions which have in all ages exercised its desire for knowledge, though hitherto in vain."

The prognostication was not fulfilled. But it was not because

the *Critique* lacked readers, even though some of them were scarcely 'kind and patient.' Nor was it because fellow laborers refused to help the master surveyor in making his footpath a high road. On the contrary, he immediately drew to himself the co-operation of the best spirits of his country. All the same, the century closed without mankind gathering the promised harvest, although in 1799 Kant again solemnly asseverated, in his famous repudiation of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, that the "system of criticism resting on an absolutely certain foundation was forever established as it was also in future ages indispensable to the highest ends of humanity." But, instead of that complete satisfaction to human reason predicted by Kant, there came, in the first generation, as logical sequence from one aspect of his system, the romantic gnosticism of Hegel, and in the second generation, as logical sequence from another aspect of his system, the spectral agnosticism of Sir William Hamilton. It would be unjust and paradoxical to class together the pet and the *bête noir* of the Scottish school; yet on the question of the knowable and the unknowable Hamilton and Hume are at one. And, though Wolff and Hegel be as far asunder as a world-illuminating sun and a light-reflecting planet, the two agree in their fundamental attitude towards things, and would be described, in Kant's phraseology, as intellectualists and dogmatists. Are then the powers of the philosophical world constants, the same since Kant as before? It really looks as if the generation now approaching the close of the nineteenth century had the same problems to solve as Kant found in the eighteenth, and thought he had disposed of forever by his critical philosophy. The only striking difference is that we have to settle with Kant himself. So deep and abiding has been his influence that no modern system, which is not to be anachronistic, can dispense with a propædæutic devoted to an examination of the critical philosophy. Even before those preliminary inquiries—prolegomena, critiques, canons, etc., which Kant held should precede philosophy proper—comes nowadays a definitive estimate of Kant's own achievement.

It is natural to begin with his method. If it did not accomplish all that the founder of the critical philosophy anticipated,

the disillusion is not greater than it was in regard to the prophetic announcements which, in modern times, heralded the rise both of empiricism and rationalism. Fired with enthusiasm for a new conception, which has proved fertile in some fields of inquiry, the imagination of the investigator reads, as in the dry light of day, the future history of its triumphs in all fields. It was as spectators or agents of a marvellous expansion of mathematics and the natural sciences that Descartes thought by the method of the one to win for reason the fact of God's existence, and Bacon by the method of the other to decipher, in the course of a few generations, the complete alphabet of nature, and by this knowledge to subjugate all her powers to the use and comfort of mankind. But growing experience has made us more sober. We have come to divine the infinitude of nature, and to realize, therefore, the impossibility of knowing or mastering all her powers; so that, apart altogether from the inadequacy of Bacon's theory of induction, we have lost faith in the omnipotence of any scientific method. And though we acknowledge that no one knew better than Descartes the procedure of mathematics, to which indeed he made notable contributions, we must hold that he failed to appreciate the distinguishing feature of mathematical demonstration, namely, its dependence upon perception (*Anschauung*) for every advance upon the data. This insight would have saved Descartes, and Spinoza after him, from the illusion that geometry might be generalized into ontology, or from the belief that the method by which relations of space were determined would disclose also the nature and mutual reference of God, man, and the world. It is possible thus to explain why neither the Cartesian nor the Baconian method has accomplished all that was originally claimed for it. And it may be that a dispassionate survey of the origin and character of the critical method will enable us to understand both the high hopes it awakened in Kant, and the bitter comment of history upon his predictions in regard to it.

For the genesis of the critical method in Kant it is necessary to look both to his native intellectual temper, and to the foreign influences by which it was moulded. So far as that temper can be examined in its original purity, it exhibits in a marked degree

the tendency to mediate between extremes, a conservative tendency animating German philosophy as a whole, but especially conspicuous in Kant's great predecessor, the encyclopædic and many-sided Leibniz. It is an attitude of mind often induced, or at any rate confirmed, by historical studies, which, revealing as they do the anarchic elements in human nature, beget a corresponding respect for any fact or system that has once successfully established itself. But, in the case of Kant, it would seem an original predisposition or bent of mind. In his first work, published in 1747, when the author was only twenty-three years of age, the obligation to look for truth somewhere in the middle ground between contending parties, is not only instinctively fulfilled, but deliberately formulated as a rule, based upon the logic of probabilities, to be followed in the investigation of truth. The question turns upon the opposite theories of Descartes and Leibniz regarding the measurement of force. Kant criticizes both, yet manages to unite them. "I choose the surest way," he says, "by adopting a view which does justice to both parties." Neither is absolutely in error. "And when reason, in the different persons of acute thinkers, is brought into harmony with itself, and the truth, which can never be entirely missed by such thorough investigators, is laid bare at the heart of their mutual contradictions, the service is one which may in a very good sense be called a defence of the honor of reason itself."¹

Heine has said that nature destined Kant to weigh groceries, but he ventured to lay other substances on his scales. Of his proclivity to weigh and balance at any rate, his earliest treatise does not permit us to doubt. And the same feature is not less apparent in his next important work, the *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels*, of the year 1755. This is a physical astronomy in which a theory of the genesis of the heavens is based upon the results of mathematical astronomy from Copernicus to Newton. The idea was afterwards independently developed by Lambert and the more celebrated Laplace,

¹ See *Gedanken von der wahren Schätzung der lebendigen Kräfte*, §§ 20, 21, 125. I, p. 30, p. 145. [The references in German are to Hartensteins ed. and in English to Müller's tr. of the *Critique* and Mahaffy's tr. of the *Prolegomena*, the pages of the English works being enclosed by brackets.]

but Kant's work remains a landmark in the history of astronomy, as, indeed, its genetic point of view is the beginning of the whole modern movement of evolutionary science. The occasion for mediation is furnished by the mechanical theory of Newton and the teleological theory of Leibniz. Whether you fall back upon the immediate agency of God, or upon mechanism, "it is evident," Kant holds, "to impartial reflection that the grounds on both sides are equally strong and absolutely convincing. But it is just as evident that there must be a mode of thought in which these apparently conflicting grounds can and should be united, and that in it the true system must be sought." Similarly in regard to efficient and final causes. If you can say, "Give me matter and I will make a world," you cannot say "Give me matter, and I will show you how a caterpillar can be produced."¹ Both theories are right within certain limits; and by fixing these limits Kant removes the ground of antagonism. Matter and motion suffice to explain the physical world; for living bodies you need as well the notion of design.

In the following year Kant undertakes to compose the strife (*litem componere*) between geometry and metaphysics. The fundamental notion of geometry is space, and of metaphysics the monad (at least according to Leibniz). How can monads, which are unspatial, exist in space? If the metaphysician can comprehend bodies only as monads, and the mathematician only as occupying space, the two modes of conception must be united. Kant grants that both are right. And by endowing the Leibnizian monad with the Newtonian force of attraction, he qualifies it to originate space.²

These examples show that Kant had a primitive bent towards mediation. His nature led him to compose intellectual differences by mutual concessions. His method was to recede somewhat from the vigorous and exclusive claim of either side in order to adopt the truth pertaining to both sides. This mental trait is of so much importance for the right understanding of his philosophy that it must be recognized at the very outset. Not that it

¹ I, pp. 218-220, 246.

² *Monadologia physica*, I, pp. 459-472.

has hitherto been altogether ignored. On the contrary, it is a commonplace that the critical philosophy mediated between the rational philosophy of Germany and the empiricism of England. But the full implication of that fact and its bearing upon the interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, cannot be properly appreciated until one realizes that it was Kant's habitual aim, in every field of inquiry, to effect a synthesis of opposing theories. If we note his way of dealing with other problems, we will not find his treatment of philosophical questions anomalous. Some illustrations have already been given from his earlier works. These have been selected because they show, as the later works could not, the primitiveness, the innateness of the characteristic under consideration. It would be easy, but it is unnecessary, to multiply examples.¹ Nor is there call to remark upon the high estimate which Kant, in common with Lessing, though not to the same degree, put upon the controversial treatment of subjects as an instrument to the attainment of truth. Enough has been said to show there was in Kant an instinctive tendency to adjudicate all disputes without rejecting the claims of rival contestants. The spirit and temper of the great critical philosopher breathe through the words of the queen in *Richard the Third*:

“I would to God all strifes were *well compounded*.”

It would be a work of great interest to trace the development of this all-reconciling mind, in relation to the varied materials on which it was nourished, and upon which it reacted. The present inquiry, however, is limited to philosophy. And the philosophic influences that exercised and shaped the thought of Kant, he himself has told us were dogmatism and scepticism. The precise determination of the meaning of these terms, and their relation to criticism, will prepare the way for an account of the philosophical development of Kant, and the genesis of the critical philosophy.

The first thing to note is that Kant describes dogmatism, scepticism, and criticism, not as systems, but as methods of phil-

¹ Other examples may be found in Fischer's *Geschichte der neuen Philosophie* (2d edition) III, pp. 160, 166-69, 191, 211, and in Vaihinger's *Commentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, I, p. 59.

osophy.¹ And the *Critique of Pure Reason* is called in the preface to the second edition, a "tractate on method."² Attention to method is, indeed, a conspicuous feature of modern philosophy, which opened with the *Novum Organum* and the *Discourse on Method*. Nor can there be any doubt that the *sine qua non* of philosophy, as of science, is a right mode of procedure. But to emphasize the importance of method to metaphysics is one thing; and to identify metaphysics with methodology quite another. Ostensibly at least Kant makes the identification, and claims to have solved the perennial problems of reason by means of a new method. But when one reads the careful, almost scholastic, discrimination of the introduction to the first edition of the *Critique*, one finds that his so-called method is essentially a system of philosophy. "All that constitutes transcendental philosophy belongs to the critique of pure reason, nay it is the complete idea of transcendental philosophy." These so-called methods of philosophy—critical, dogmatical, and sceptical—indicate not so much different ways of dealing with facts, as different principles adopted or different problems proposed.³ Officially, Kant describes them as 'methods';⁴ really, they stand to him for different types of philosophy. This would scarcely deserve mention were it not that the ingenious name 'critical method' has been used as a charm to exorcise other systems of philosophy. The important thing, of course, is, not the settlement of a verbal dispute, but a clear apprehension of the characteristics and *differentiæ* Kant marked by the terms 'dogmatism,' 'scepticism' and 'criticism.'

¹ III, 561-2 (733-4). On the importance for the history of philosophy of these and other classificatory conceptions, originated or first utilized by Kant, see Paulsen's *Versuch einer Entwicklungsgeschichte der Kantischen Erkenntnisstheorie*, pp. 98-9. The older historians of philosophy had no systematic classification. For example, Brucker puts Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, and Wolff all together in a single class, which he designates 'eclectics.'

² III, 21.

³ This is really implied in Vaihinger's analyses (*Commentar*, I, pp. 26-8), though his intention is to bring out the methodological character of the *Critique*.

⁴ His scholastic habit of minute classification may account for describing them as methods in III, 560-2 (732-5). Cf. *Logik*, Einl., VIII, p. 84. The "tractate on method" is said (III, 21) to contain, if not a system, at least the entire outline of metaphysics.

The most fundamental distinction is that criticism does, while dogmatism and scepticism do not, make a systematic inquiry into the capacity of reason for attaining knowledge independently of experience. This common characteristic of dogmatism and scepticism throws into relief the difference between them, and is well brought out in the excellent definition given by Kant in his reply to Eberhard's strictures. "By dogmatism," he says, "is meant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* general confidence in the principles of reason, without antecedent criticism of its capacity, merely on account of its successes; and by skepticism, general distrust of pure reason, without antecedent criticism, solely on account of the failure of its achievements."¹

It will be noticed that it is about reason all these distinctions turn. And the careful reader of Kant will find that, barring the somewhat stronger accentuation of the absence of a criticism of the powers of reason, dogmatism is really synonymous with rationalism. Now the rationalism Kant always has in mind is that which culminated in Leibniz and Wolff, its earlier representatives being Descartes, Spinoza and Malebranche. This philosophy, it must never be forgotten, was developed under the direct influence of mathematics, whose marvellous expansion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries fascinated and dominated the best contemporaneous thinkers. If their problem was to find a theory of knowledge—and, despite striking exceptions, modern philosophy is epistemological as ancient was ontological—in what other field were they so likely to discover the way to success as in the most certain of all sciences, the one, too, that was exhibiting before their own eyes such astounding evidence of vitality and resources? Other knowledge came by the tardy and restricted process of sensation; mathematics, so it seemed, depended upon nothing but reason. Its first principles were furnished by reason, and reason produced a concatenation of new truths by means of analysis and the syllogism. Mathematical knowledge possessed the utmost clearness and certainty; it might, therefore, be taken as the type of all knowledge. Accordingly, the rationalistic philosophy de-

¹ *Ueber eine Entdeckung nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehlich gemacht werden soll.* VI, p. 44.

clares that knowledge is to be gained by pure reason, which is at once an instrument and a source of knowledge. Reason contains in itself certain notions and principles, which have been called innate ideas.¹ And by means of analysis and syllogistic deduction from principles, *i. e.*, by following the method of mathematics, reason is to attain to a full and adequate knowledge of reality. The essence of things is reproduced in notions.² And the ultimate aim of this system is to rationalize the universe. Like mathematics, it owes no allegiance to sensible experience, and makes no halt at its boundaries. Its main interest is precisely in the objects which transcend the limits of sense, in the nature and destiny of the soul, the beginning and end of the world, and God, the supreme source of both. As it does not inquire into the possibility of this supersensible or transcendent knowledge, it is uncritical, or, in the narrowest sense of that term, dogmatical.

That dogmatism meant all this in Kant's mind, in which, however, the single thought of non-criticism was doubtless uppermost, a few quotations will establish. The dogmatist is described as believing himself in possession of 'fundamental objective principles,' and of a 'pure reason and understanding that is self-expansive *a priori*.' "With a pure knowledge derived from notions according to principles he claims to need no other resources." And, setting no limits to his explorations, he undertakes to "grasp the whole chain of conditions and comprehend the derivation of the conditioned by beginning with the unconditioned." "And it is in this very kind of knowledge which transcends the world of the senses, and where experience can neither guide nor correct us, that reason prosecutes its investigations, which by their importance we consider far more excellent, and by their tendency far more elevated, than anything the understanding can find in the sphere of phenomena." "These unavoidable problems of pure reason are God, Freedom and Immortality." The science devoted to these problems is "called metaphysics, and its procedure is at first dogmatical, *i. e.*, without previous examination of the capacity or incapacity of reason for

¹ In Kant's language the rationalist is a 'noologist.' III, 561 (733).

² The rationalist is an 'intellectualist.' III, 561 (732).

so great an enterprise it confidently undertakes the execution of it." "The dogmatist, without any misgivings about his own fundamental objective principles, that is, without criticism, continues his course with undisturbed gravity." But without criticism, "without determination of the extent and limits of human reason, all the assertions of reason are made at random." "The dogmatist has not measured the sphere of his understanding, and has not, therefore, determined according to principles, the limits of his own possible knowledge, and does not know beforehand how much he is really able to achieve. . . . If he has been found out in one single assertion of his which he cannot justify, . . . suspicion falls on all his assertions, however plausible they may appear. Accordingly, the sceptic is the true schoolmaster to lead the dogmatic speculator (*dogmatischer Vernünftler*) towards a sound criticism of the understanding and of reason."¹

As rationalism or dogmatism has never called in question the certainty or the limits of human knowledge, it is the function of scepticism to raise doubts and awaken caution. Scepticism is the necessary reaction against dogmatism, the next stage in the self-knowledge of reason. But scepticism, as Kant uses that term, must not be identified with nescience—that sensationalist nihilism, for example, in which the late Professor Green found the logical outcome of Hume's *Treatise*.² This know-nothing theory is in fact more than once mentioned by Kant and by him, too, regarded as the consequence of deriving all knowledge from experience; but it is not designated 'scepticism' merely, but 'absolute scepticism,' 'universal scepticism,' or 'the metaphysical doctrine of universal doubt.'³ The scepticism which he ordinarily has in

¹ III, 507 (654), 509 (657), 27, 333 (407), 37 (3), 37, 507 (654), 506 (653), 510 (658-9).

² It is a matter of regret that Green did not compare the *Enquiry* with the *Treatise*. The latter is the close of sensationalist philosophy, the former the beginning of common sense philosophy. Kant means by scepticism the empiricism of the *Enquiry*, not the potential nescience of the *Treatise*. Hence the assertion, even then astounding, that "Hume regarded the objects of experience as things-in-themselves," *Kr. d. pr. V.*, I. Th. I. B. I *Hptst.* V, 56.

³ *Logik*, Einleitung, VIII, 84; *Kr. d. pr. V.*, I, Th. I. B. I, *Hptst.* V, p. 56; *Ueber eine Entdeckung*, etc. 2. Abschn. VI, p. 44 note.

mind, the scepticism which he contrasts with this nihilism (though it may, both logically and psychologically, lead to it) is what we nowadays call empiricism. Like dogmatism and rationalism, the two terms are differentiated in the last chapter of the *Critique*, but, like those, they are in the body of the book used interchangeably. There are two fundamental characteristics connoted by the terms: (1) That knowledge of the supra-sensible is illusory; (2) That no knowledge possesses universality and necessity. The first is the starting-point of scepticism. The sceptic casts doubt upon assertions regarding the supra-sensible because he sees the opposite might be maintained with the same reason. Provoked into existence by the transcendent pretensions of metaphysics, scepticism does not in this incipient stage attach itself to either mathematics or physics.¹ But doubt grows by what it feeds on; and the boundary between experience and what transcends experience is soon lost sight of. "In the beginning scepticism may, merely for the sake of restricting reason to the field of experience, have declared everything that went beyond this as vain and illusory; but by degrees, as it was perceived that it was the very same principles *a priori* which are used in experience, that, unnoticed and as it seemed unblamed, led further than experience, the scepticism began to attack those very principles of experience."² But doubt of the *a priori* principles of experience involved mathematics and every scientific use of pure reason.³ Not that in this, the second stage of scepticism, knowledge as such is impeached. But, as in the first stage, the capacity of pure reason to go beyond experience was discredited, so now the principles which pure reason contributes to experience are cast out. Pure reason, however, is the source of the *a priori*; and only the *a priori* is universal and necessary. Knowledge, therefore, as it

¹ *Logik*, Einl., VIII, 84; *Kr. d. pr.* V., Vorrede V, 13. In the last passage Kant maintains that Hume's scepticism did not touch mathematics. The error, which could not have been made by anyone who had read the *Treatise*, is repeated elsewhere cf. V, 55.

² *Prolegomena*, § 57.

³ V, 55-6. To this more thorough scepticism, according to Kant, Hume's logically leads and would have led Hume himself, had he not supposed mathematics an analytical science. *Die Mathematik war so lange noch gut weggekommen, weil Hume dafür hielt, dass ihre Sätze alle analytisch wären* V, 55.

is left by scepticism in the second stage of its growth, is devoid of these characteristics. A representative of this sort of scepticism "would hold the spontaneous generation of our understanding (and of our reason), without being impregnated by experience, as impossible; and considering all presumptive principles of reason *a priori* as imaginary, he would arrive at the conclusion that they were nothing but a habit arising from experience and its laws, that they were therefore merely empirical, *i. e.*, in themselves contingent rules to which we *wrongly ascribe necessity and universality*."¹ From this to the third and last stage of scepticism—what Kant calls 'absolute scepticism,' or the 'metaphysical doctrine of universal doubt'—the way is short and easy. Common sense, of course, will come to the rescue of the vulgar; but the learned, who witness the fall of the crowning sciences, and know not henceforth how far, and why, to trust reason, will not be able to prevent their suspicion of *a priori* knowledge infecting the empirical remainder, which, on the other hand, cannot point, in defense of its validity, to any attestation but blind, irrational custom. Thus universal empiricism reveals itself as genuine, unadulterated scepticism.²

This third stage of scepticism has been mentioned only to be excluded from Kant's use of the term. Nihilism or 'the metaphysical doctrine of universal doubt' is, it is true, a consequence, but it is not a part of Kant's conception of scepticism. The sensationist atomism which Kantio-Hegelians both in Britain and America represent Kant as overcoming, was never really in his mind as a problem to be overcome. For him at least, Hume was not the apostle of nescience, but the clear-seeing and critical champion of experience. As Wolff represented one tendency in modern philosophy, Hume stood for the other. He stood for that direction of thought which was originated by Bacon and Hobbes, systematically developed by Locke, continued with reservations, but also with valuable additions, by Berkeley, and which has al-

¹ III, 508 (655). The reasoning is attributed to Hume. Cf. note 17.

² *Prolegomena*, § 57, *Kr. d. pr. V.*, V, pp. 13, 56. Note that in speaking of empiricism as the source of nihilism, V, 13, Kant says: *Der Empirismus gründet sich auf einer gefühlten, der Rationalismus aber auf einer eingesehenen Nothwendigkeit*.

ways distinguished British from continental philosophy. The adherents of this school find their alpha and omega in sensible experience. As to the subject of knowledge, they maintain that reality is apprehended by the senses alone, everything else being imagination. And the subject of knowledge they take to be without innate ideas or principles—a *tabula rasa* or ‘empty chamber’ that receives all its content from the senses. Their method is inductive. Recognizing no *a priori* principles, there could be no other scientific procedure for them than generalization from the particulars of sensible experience. It does not occur to them to attempt to rationalize the universe; they are content to record such reports as it makes of itself by way of the senses. Far from deeming anything universal or necessary, it is their opinion that things might be very different from what one happens to find them. But such as they are, the objects of our experience are the only objects of our knowledge. This is the point at which, in ordinary language, empiricism passes over into scepticism. It denies the pretensions of reason to go beyond the realm of sensible experience. It puts a veto upon the transcendent use of principles. Comfortably domiciled in the kingdom of fact, the sceptic likens the supra-sensible world to a dark and shoreless ocean, with fogs and cross-currents, which cheats and yet stimulates with empty hopes the Tantalus of dogmatism to whom the gods have never whispered, ‘Lo! the realm of illusion.’

As scepticism is the second step in the progress of reason, criticism is the third. “Scepticism is a resting-place of reason, where it may reflect for a time on its dogmatical wanderings . . . in order to choose its way with greater certainty for the future; but it can never be its permanent dwelling-place. That can only be found in perfect certainty . . . of the limits within which all our knowledge of objects is enclosed.”¹ This fixed determination of the limits of knowledge it is the essential function of criticism to supply. But until its task is accomplished it is haunted by a doubt of everything *a priori*, inherited from its parent scepticism. Both these aspects are brought forward in the definition: “Criticism is the maxim of a universal suspicion of all

¹ III, 506 (652).

synthetic judgments *a priori* until a universal ground of their possibility is discovered in the essential conditions of our faculties of knowledge.”¹ When, however, we ignore the sceptical state of mind, induced by the circumstances of his history, in which the critical philosopher goes about his task, we find that his real and peculiar problem is the investigation of the capacities of human reason.² He has to determine the origin, extent, validity, and limits of *a priori* knowledge. By ‘criticism’ Kant denotes his own solution of this problem. Criticism implies, therefore, the validity of *a priori* principles in so far as they refer to possible experience. It redeems from the scepticism of Hume an *a priori* origin for the categories of the understanding. But if criticism is so far rationalistic, it coincides with scepticism in laying down the limits of knowledge. It shows how fantastic is the hope of arriving beyond the limits of experience at the charming fields of an intellectual world.³ Its inexorable finding is: “Outside the field of experience nothing can become an object to reason.”⁴

This account of criticism as an examination of the capacities of reason revealing *a priori* elements in knowledge, but finding them restricted to possible experience, is the one ordinarily given by Kant. It is also conformable with the whole tenor of his work. And it is criticism in this sense that has made an epoch in the history of philosophy by fusion of rationalism and empiricism. A somewhat different description, however, closely connected with what Kant calls his Copernican thought in philosophy,⁵ is based upon the contrast between subject and object. Dogmatism and empiricism, it is said, deal with objects; criticism with their relations to our faculties of knowledge. “We deal with a notion

¹ *Ueber eine Entdeckung*, etc., VI, 44.

² The *Kr. d. r. V* abounds in confirmatory passages. See especially III, 49 (10), 50, 7 (xxii–xxiii). Cf. *Zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie* (1796), VI, 492. Riehl insists it is a critique, not of the faculties of knowledge, but of knowledge itself. (*Philosophischer Criticismus*, I, 17, 18). Cf. Windelband, *Geschichte der neuen Philosophie*, II, 50. But the difference between a critique of reason and of knowledge (synthetic *a priori*) is, in Kant’s use of terms, more imaginary than real. The point will come up again.

³ III, 485 (622).

⁴ III, 506 (653).

⁵ III, 18.

critically when we consider it only in relation to our faculty of knowledge, that is to say only in relation to the subjective conditions of thinking it, without undertaking to make any determinations regarding its object."¹ Thus the concept of matter is explained, not by a predicate which is ascribed to it as an object, but by means of its relation to the faculty of knowledge in which the idea of it can first be given.² In other words, criticism means epistemology, a theory of knowledge in contradistinction to ontology or theory of existence.³ The eye sees all things, but not itself; yet the functions of the eye are capable of scientific examination. While the dogmatist is wholly engrossed with objects, the critical philosopher turns inward to the subject of knowledge. If, in the previous paragraph, criticism was opposed to dogmatism and scepticism because they had not systematically surveyed the capacities of pure reason, it is here opposed to them because their vision is of outward things rather than of inner functions. The two accounts, however, agree in concentrating attention upon knowledge. But their different influences are discernible in the finished system of Kant. To the criticism of knowledge *a priori* the system owes its rationalistic features. Its phenomenalism, on the other hand, comes from its disregard of the real world of objects and its accentuation of the subjective conditions of knowledge.

If Mr. Herbert Spencer had not already appropriated the title,⁴ we might with the greatest propriety follow Krug in designating Kant's criticism 'synthetic philosophy.' It is the synthesis of rationalism and empiricism which, in Fichte's language,

¹ *Kritik d. Urtheilskraft* § 74, V, 408. Cf. III, 343 (421).

² *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft*, I, 1. Anm. 2, IV, 370.

³ That metaphysics was no doctrine of the supra-sensible world, and could only be a theory of knowledge, Kant saw clearly as early as 1766. See *Träume eines Geistersehers erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*, II, pp. 375-8. Cf. Windelband, II, 28; Paulsen, 94; Fischer, III, 245.

⁴ Mr. Spencer, however, fails, much more obviously than Kant, to effect a synthesis of philosophical tendencies. Nor is this surprising to anyone who bears in mind that evolution is only a process, and as such can tell us nothing of what underlies the process—the ultimate terms of existence and knowledge of which philosophy is in quest. Mr. Spencer's generalizations of the laws of evolutionary processes are brilliant. His *philosophy* is an interesting variation between dogmatic agnosticism and gnostic dogmatism.

form its thesis and antithesis. Criticism is the combination of the conflicting elements, tendencies, and results of pre-Kantian philosophy. Whether it is an articulated or only an aggregated whole, is not now the question. Be its components a medley of concepts or a system under a single idea of reason, the new structure is made of the old materials. In the whole history of philosophy there is no such mediatising achievement as the system of Kant, that of Aristotle even not excepted. And the right understanding of it requires a careful analysis of the elements it forced into unexpected combination.

‘Reason’ and ‘experience’ were the shibboleths of the two philosophical schools Kant found before him. There were, of course, eclectics who tore pieces from both liveries and formed elegant patchwork to hide at once their own nakedness and the essential disharmony of the tissues. It is the merit of Kant to have gone back to fundamental principles, and to have thrown their antagonism into the strongest prominence. Disdaining the incongruences of popular eclecticism, he saw that the issue lay between Hume and Leibniz, and he took his place as judge between the contestants for whom at length he proved a mediator. The one set forth the claims of reason, the other the limits of experience, each assuming his starting point without further inquiry. The judge raised the previous question, the question of the nature and possibility of reason and experience respectively. Assuming with the rationalist that reason gives us *a priori* knowledge, he yet finds a problem in the circumstance that judgments which we possess prior to experience of things should yet be valid, on actual trial, regarding those things. How can the subject make valid assertions about the object without experience of it? This is the critical question, in virtue of which Kant ceases to be a dogmatist. But it does not impugn rationalism; it only inquires into its possibility. And the answer is: Our knowledge *a priori* is possible only if objects are not independent entities foreign to the subject, but in form at least dependent upon the subject,—only, that is, if they are objects *for us*, or appearances, not things-in-themselves. Rationalism is adhered to: there is knowledge *a priori*. But rationalism is also modified:

this *a priori* knowledge is of the objects of our own experience, and of these only because they are appearances to us, not things-in-themselves.

Or, assuming with the sceptic, that experience is the be-all and end-all of knowledge, Kant asks, How is experience possible? Experience is an ordered combination of perceptions coming to the subject from without. Does everything come from the object? Or is the subject the source of the formal relations, the universal and necessary connections of experience? This is the critical question the sceptic has never put to himself. The answer presents a new conception of experience as sensuous material informed by reason, of whose principles, therefore, there may be *a priori* knowledge. The main thought of scepticism is left intact: there is no knowledge outside of experience. But experience itself is rationalized so as to admit of *a priori* knowledge within its domain. Or, in other words, there may be knowledge without the actual *content* of experience; but, since it is only of those formal relations whereby all experience must be given, this knowledge never goes beyond the *extent* of possible experience.

Setting out with the deliverances of reason, we have found their condition in experience; they are possible only of the objects of our experience (*i.e.*, of *Erscheinungen* or appearances). And, setting out with experience, we have found its condition in the formative principles of reason; without reason there would be only a chaos of impressions. In the felicitous language of Vaihinger,¹ reason is possible only through experience, and experience is possible only through reason. The work in which this fundamental mediation between rationalism and empiricism is

¹*Commentar*, I, p. 7. Vaihinger's treatment of this subject is admirable. See also *Commentar*, I, pp. 49-58. "Dogmatism teaches: knowledge arises *without* experience and goes *beyond* experience; empiricism teaches: knowledge arises *from* experience and is destined only *for* experience; criticism teaches: knowledge arises *without* experience, but is destined only *for* experience" (p. 58). Compare Kuno Fischer's account of Kant's mediation (*System d. Logik u. Met.* §54): All knowledge is experience (Emp.); but experience is only possible through pure concepts of the understanding (Rat.); these concepts are valid only within experience (Emp.), but they are before all experience, *i.e.*, *a priori* (Rat.). They are not made by experience (Refutation of Emp.), rather is experience made by them, but nothing but experience is made by them (Refutation of Rat.).

effected, Kant calls his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The title indicates happily the rationalistic starting-point and tone, as well as the most conspicuous problem of the work. But it fails to suggest the scarcely less important investigation into the possibility of experience, which some recent critics¹ have regarded as the crucial inquiry of the *Critique*. Its true significance, and at the same time its mediatory character, might, however, be fully brought out by the double title: *Critique of Pure Reason and Theory of Experience*.

The conception of criticism as the synthesis of empiricism and rationalism is of so much importance for a right understanding of Kant's philosophy that it may be well, before proceeding further, to illustrate this point somewhat in detail, even at the risk of repeating what has gone before or anticipating what is to follow. If philosophy takes account of all that is, and existence is either a subject or an object of knowledge, it follows that the agreements and differences of philosophical systems will all group themselves about (1) the subject of knowledge, (2) the object of knowledge, and (3) knowledge itself, its nature and limits. Not that any one of these points of comparison will always yield results different from the other two, as though there were no connection between them. On the contrary, when a theory of knowledge is given, it is generally possible to infer the view of the subject and object that is apt to go along with it. And, in the same way, though not to the same extent, a particular theory of objective existence implies a corresponding doctrine of knowledge and its subject. Notwithstanding this correlation, however, it is desirable, if we would see clearly and exhaustively what rationalism and empiricism have contributed to criticism, to survey them side by side with these three fixed points of comparison.

Whether the subject of knowledge is active or passive is the fundamental issue, under the first head, between the two opposing schools. For the one, the mind was a waxen tablet, for the other, a self-active force. According to Leibniz the mind creates knowledge, according to Locke it receives it from without. In

¹ See Cohen's *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung*, p. 3: "Die Kritik d. r. V. ist Kritik der Erfahrung."

both the process was gradual ; but, in the one case, knowledge was the outcome of an evolution of mental activity, in the other, an aggregate passively received into the empty mental chamber through the apertures of sense. In this meaning, the rationalists held to the Cartesian doctrine of innate ideas ; in every sense, Locke rejected it. Furthermore, each of the two schools recognized only one faculty of knowledge. The rationalist found the essence of mind in reason, of which he regarded sense as a lower form differing only in the clearness and distinctness of its reports. For the empiricist, the subject of knowledge was purely sensitive, reason being explained as the product of sensuous impressions. These contrasts Kant recognizes and merges in his system. The subject of knowledge must be both spontaneous and receptive. It has two independent sources of knowledge, sensibility as well as understanding. It produces the form of knowledge, and receives the content from without. The affirmations of rationalism and the affirmations of empiricism meet in the critical account of the subject of knowledge.

When, secondly, we turn to knowledge itself, we find the same fusion of opposites, whether we regard its elements, its character, or its limits. That it is a compound of sensations and notions, follows from the previous statement that it originates both in sense and understanding. "Concepts without precepts are empty," Kant says to the rationalist, and to the sensationalist : "percepts without concepts are blind." The rationalist had asserted and the empiricist denied, that knowledge was universal and necessary. Kant agreed with the latter that all sense-apprehension of objects was contingent ; but, holding that there was an *a priori* determination of the form of possible objects, and that such determinations were not contingent, he did not break absolutely with the rationalist. Knowledge of things, however, is not possible through pure reason or understanding. Hence knowledge is limited to the realm of experience, actual or possible. The recognition of rational elements in knowledge had heretofore carried with it a belief in the adequacy of knowledge to deal with supra-sensible objects, like God and immortality. On the other hand, the limiting of knowledge to the field of experience had

hitherto been associated with a sensationalist theory of its nature.¹ The novelty of Kant's system is that it combines for the first time this sceptical limitation of the range of knowledge, with a strongly rationalistic view of the nature of knowledge. At the same time this rational theory of the nature of knowledge is modified by empiricism, and this sceptical limitation of the extent of knowledge based upon rational principles.

In the third place, Kant's theory of the object of knowledge presents a similar compromise between rationalism and empiricism. From the dawn of speculation to its last decline, from Parmenides to Hegel, the rationalist has asserted the identity of thought and being. *Esse = intelligi. Ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum.* There could, therefore, be no question as to the knowableness of things; for their true reality was expressed in the notion of them. The marks of the concept were the qualities of the things, and the organization of both was the same. And not only were things knowable, but in virtue of the identity of thought and being, the nature and relation of things might be discovered by means of the laws of thought. The principles of contradiction and of sufficient reason became the fundamental laws of real existence. And metaphysics claimed to be the reality of the world, whose image alone we apprehend by sense. Or if, anterior to Kant, this extreme form of the identity of thought and being was not always taught, at least their commensurability was never doubted. The rationalism of Leibniz and of Wolff assuredly held that things were truly known by the notions which we formed of them. Reason, if not absolutely identical with existence, at least reproduced and apprehended it. This position was directly traversed by the sceptic. He maintained the absolute diversity, nay even the incommensurability of things and thought. His sensational theory of the origin and nature of knowledge provided for no object beyond the closed circle of his own experience. Instead of the thought reality (noumenon)

¹ In Book II. of his *Essay*, Locke gives a sensationalist theory of the origin and nature of knowledge, but in Book IV. he assumes it is adequate to the supra-sensible. Berkeley's doctrine of 'notions,' though undeveloped, saves him from the charge of similar inconsistency.

of the dogmatist, sense-appearance (phenomenon) was the only object of knowledge he recognized. He evaporated 'what is' into 'what appears to me.' Kant, on the other hand, rejects neither thesis nor antithesis. He finds a place in his system for both the noumenalism of the dogmatist and the phenomenism of the sceptic. To the question, Are things identical with thought? he replies that the objects of our knowledge are made up of two elements, form and matter, of which the one, matter, is the opposite of thought, while the other, form, is identical with it. But Kant's mediation does not stop here. The object, of which peaceable assignment has thus been made for the benefit of the two rapacious creditors, is not the genuine thing-in-itself. And the thing-in-itself furnishes occasion for further compromise. With the noumenalist, Kant asserts its existence, with the phenomenalist, he denies its knowableness by us. It might be an object of knowledge, he concedes to the rationalist, for a being of pure reason alone, a being, therefore, with a faculty of intellectual perception (*intuitus originarius*), like God;¹ but for man, who is sensible as well as rational, and whose perception, therefore, is sensuous (*intuitus derivativus*), it can never be, he holds with the empiricist, an object of knowledge. To the question, Is knowledge of real existence? Kant answers "No;" but the phenomenism of his theory of knowledge goes along with an invincible noumenalism which finally finds in faith foundations beyond the reach of scepticism. Rationalism had hitherto looked askance at faith. With *a priori* knowledge it laid claim to things-in-themselves and stood for noumenalism. Kant accepted this *a priori* knowledge, but finding it impossible to apply it to anything except appearances, he is driven to phenomenism, which had hitherto been the consequence of denying *a priori* knowledge.

The startling combinations of the critical philosophy are the necessary correlate of its heterogeneous elements. So much is already clear. But further light upon the point, and indeed upon the whole system, may be derived from a study of the emergence of these elements within the intellectual horizon of Kant, the order of their succession, the tenacity of their lodgment, their re-

¹ III, 79.

active influence upon one another, and their ultimate precipitation into the form of the critical philosophy. The best comment upon the finished system is a picture of the various mental phases that went to its production. We want a history of the philosophical growth of the philosopher. To explain Kant, says Kuno Fischer, in words that have become proverbial, is to give an historical derivation of him. We must, therefore, supplement the foregoing account of the objective sources of his system with a sketch of its subjective origin. From the logical, we pass to the psychological genesis of the critical philosophy.

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